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SUBJECT: CITING INSECURITY, OPPOSITION WALKS OUT OF  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Classified By: Poloff KRBel for reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (U) Summary: Opposition deputies, including all members of Jean-Pierre Bemba's Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC), walked out of the April 13 National Assembly plenary, citing concerns for security for themselves and party facilities. They announced that they would not return until demands for a more secure environment were met, and specifically condemned a late-night visit and subsequent looting by "armed men" at the home of an MLC deputy. MLC leaders called for return of Jean-Pierre Bemba's television and radio stations to the air, and the removal of police from MLC headquarters, as conditions for their return to the Assembly. End summary.

¶2. (U) MLC executive secretary and deputy Thomas Luhaka said in the National Assembly on April 13 that opposition deputies were concerned about their security in Kinshasa, and MLC deputies in particular. After introducing a motion to formalize their complaints, Luhaka led a walkout of opposition deputies from the chamber. Luhaka's motion asserted that MLC deputy Omer Egwake was visited in the night of April 12 - 13 by 12 armed men who appeared to be wearing Republican Guard uniforms. After being threatened with guns, Egwake's house was looted. The motion cited similar acts perpetrated against East Kasai deputy Tshimanga, Kinshasa deputies Lisanga Bonganga and Franck Diongo, Equateur governor Jose Makila, and other MLC supporters and sympathizers.

¶3. (U) In a televised debate April 14 between Luhaka and Marko Banguli of the majority coalition Alliance for the Presidential Majority (AMP), Luhaka set down three preconditions for the deputies' return. First, that the signals from Bemba-owned broadcast stations, which have been off the air since the March violence, be restored. Second, that control of MLC headquarters, currently occupied by police, be returned to the party. And finally, that the government guarantee an end to acts of intimidation and vandalism against members of the opposition coalition Union for the Nation.

¶4. (C) Key MLC parliamentarians reiterated that they are being persecuted for membership of the opposition. MLC deputy Delly Sesanga, who was named president of the Assembly's key political committee last week, restated demands that Bemba's television and radio stations be allowed to broadcast freely and that the MLC headquarters be vacated by police. MLC senator Jacques Djoli claimed that the current situation "points to a nascent military dictatorship," and called on the international community to support consultative talks that would show that responsibility for the March 22-23 fighting was shared.

15. (C) Comment: In principle, the walkout will not significantly impede Assembly operations as opposition deputies number only about 100. It will harm the Assembly's credibility, however, especially in light of widespread allegations that Kabila hard-liners are suppressing the opposition. Ham-handed actions by security forces against MLC officials are only fueling such allegations. End comment.  
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